

South Texas Water Master Advisory Committee

Minutes

7/11/12

Esteban (Steve) Ramos, South Texas Water Master, welcomed the members and guests.

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 pm by Chairman Mario Escobar. A quorum of the committee was present. Everyone introduced themselves.

Steve Raabe moved and Pat Brzozowski seconded to approve the minutes from July 18, 2011 meeting. The motion carried.

Watermaster Program Overview and Update

Steve Ramos presented an overview of the watermaster program. The watermaster programs have moved from the office of Compliance and Enforcement to the Office of Water, Water Availability Division under Kellye Rila, and new Watermaster Manager, John Gillen. Mr. Ramos introduced the new staff members of the South Texas Watermaster Program.

Mr. Ramos reported on the activities of the watermaster staff including notices of violation, complaint investigations and site visits. 2011 was the driest one-year drought on record.

The TCEQ provided the watermaster with a Mickey Leland intern to assist in administration of the program. The TXWAS information database implementation is continuing. Trained two new deputies.

Budget

Cindy Hooper, Watermaster Liaison, presented the proposed FY13 budget. The FY13 Operating Budget needs totaled \$557,905.87. The assessment necessary based on 97.5% collection rate is \$572,211.15. The watermaster program is self-funded and water rights are assessed a fee to fund the program which includes a \$50 base fee plus a per acre foot fee based on type of water use. Ms. Hooper explained that the FY13 budget is decreasing from the FY12 budget. The decrease is primarily due to salary savings due to replacing retired employees with new staff. Ms. Hooper explained that in prior years the liaisons had other duties in the agency other than support of the watermaster program; however, starting in the FY13 budget they will now exclusively support the watermaster program. The South Texas Watermaster Program will be assessed for one liaison. The next biggest line item increase was in fuel due to rising fuel costs. The committee expressed appreciation for the staff's efforts in controlling costs but emphasized the desire to have appropriate and sufficient equipment for the program to execute their jobs. In response to a question from the committee, Mr. Ramos explained that the program has specific performance measures that are set by the Legislative Budget Board.

Kellye Rila reported that a proto-type water rights operation model is being developed for the Guadalupe basin using TCEQ and outside (Microsoft) funding. The model will be GIS based. If the development is successful then it will be applied to other basins.

Bryan Serold moved and Kenny Draper seconded to recommend approval of the FY13 Budget as presented. The motion carried.

New Business

Pat Brzozowski asked if the watermaster program has any education programs to educate the public and water right holders on the legal use of state water. Ms. Rila stated that the agency receives more requests for information during drought periods. She also stated that the agency has conducted a series of drought workshops which included significant information on water rights. The agency issues press releases. The recent agency effort in assessing the need for a watermaster in other areas of the state was a great opportunity to educate on water rights. Ms. Rila stated that they would be happy to hold any educational meetings if requested.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.